

Message Text

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PAGE 01 QUITO 05135 261547Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
AID-05 PC-01 HA-05 /079 W
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P R 261405Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8885
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 5135

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, EC
SUBJECT: PARTIES AND MEDIA SWINGING TOWARD ROLDOS

1. WITH THE OFFICIAL VOTE COUNT
JUST BEGINNING AND THE SECOND ROUND ELECTION SEVERAL
WEEKS AWAY, PARTIES AND THE PRESS ARE BEGINNING TO
DEFINE THEIR POLITICAL POSITIONS. THE LEAST SURPRISING
TO DATE WAS RODRIGO BORJA'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT (ID) PARTY
DECLARATION ON JULY 21 THAT IT WOULD SUPPORT THE
ROLDOS-HURTADO TICKET. GIVEN THE IDEOLOGICAL AFFINITY
OF THE ID TO THE CFP/DP SLATE, AND THE APPEAL OF BOTH
GROUPS TO YOUTH, THE ID'S ACTION WAS EXPECTED.

2. OF GREATER POTENTIAL SIGNIFICANCE ARE THE CRACKS
IN THE COALITION WHICH SUPPORTED RAUL CLEMENTE HUERTA'S
BID. ALTHOUGH OFFICIAL LIBERAL PARTY COMMUNIQUE
CONTINUE TO EXPRESS CONFIDENCE THAT HUERTA WILL
ULTIMATELY TOP SIXTO DURAN IN THE VOTE, THIS CONFIDENCE
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PAGE 02 QUITO 05135 261547Z

IS APPARENTLY SHARED NEITHER WITHIN THE PARTY NOR BY ALL
COALITION MEMBERS. CITING PROBLEMS WITH ITS LIBERAL
COALITION PARTNERS AND CALLING THE ROLDOS-HURTADO SLATE
"NOXIOUS AND RECALCITRANT RIGHTIST FASCISM" AND THE
DURAN-ICAZA SLATE "REPRESENTATIVES OF THE EXTREME RIGHT
AND NEFARIOUS VELASQUISMO", THE SOCIALIST PARTY DECLARED
ON JULY 22 THAT IT WAS WITHDRAWING FROM HUERTA'S

COALITION AND WOULD ABSTAIN FROM THE SECOND ROUND.
THE SOCIALIST DO NOT CONTROL MANY VOTES, BUT THEY WERE
HUERTA'S MOST LEGITIMATE CLAIM TO A LEFT-OF-CENTER IMAGE.

3. THE SCHISM WITHIN THE LIBERAL PARTY BETWEEN RAUL
CLEMENTE AND HIS NEPHEW FRANCISCO "PANCHO" HUERTA ALSO
APPEARS TO BE GROWING. BELIEVING THAT RAUL CLEMTE'S
CANDIDACY HAD BEEN SHOT DOWN, PANCHO RETURNED FROM A
FORCED VACATION TO TAKE OVER THE PARTY HELM ON JULY 17.
HOWEVER, WITH RAUL CLEMENTE STILL IN THE RACE, RAUL
CLEMENTE'S HAND-PICKED DIRECTORATE REACTED BY PLACING
PANCHO ONCE AGAIN ON FORCED LEAVE, THIS TIME INDEFINITELY.
PANCHO HAS SINCE BEEN SHARPLY CRITICAL OF THE DIRECTORATE
AND HAS THREATENED TO CALL A NATIONAL PARTY ASSEMBLY TO
RATIFY HIS POSITION AS PARTY DIRECTOR. HE HAS RECEIVED
THE WRITTEN SUPPORT OF SEVERAL SIERRA PROVINCIAL DIRECTORATES
WHO HAVE PLEDGED THEMSELVES TO BOYCOTT FURTHER
NATIONAL DIRECTORATE MEETINGS. PANCHO HAS REFRAINED
TO DATE FROM SPECIFICALLY SUPPORTING A CANDIDATE IN
THE SECOND ROUND, BUT THERE REMAINS THE POSSIBILITY THAT
HE MIGHT BOLT THE PARTY AND SUPPORT ROLDOS-HURTADO.

4. THE PRESS IS ALSO BEGINNING TO EDGE TOWARD A MORE
TOLERANT POSITION VIS-A-VIS ROLDOS. EL COMERCIO, WHICH
DECLARED ITS SUPPORT FOR BORJA'S ID THE DAY BEFORE
ELECTIONS, HAD STUDIOUSLY KEPT POLITICAL COMMENTARY
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PAGE 03 QUITO 05135 261547Z

OFF OF ITS EDITORIAL PAGE UNTIL JULY 20 WHEN IT PUBLISHED
COMMENTARY BY GERMANICO SALGADO, A ROLDOS SUPPORTER,
WHICH WAS DECIDELY SYMPATHETIC TO ROLDOS. SIMILARLY,
ON JULY 21 GUAYAQUIL'S EL UNIVERSO, WHICH HAD BEEN
STAUNCHLY PRO-RAUL CLEMENTE HUERTA, CARRIED AN EDITORIAL
COMMENTARY BY ALFREDO PINOARGOTE WHICH WAS ALSO PRO-
ROLDOS AND SOMEWHAT CRITICAL OF HUERTA. PINOARGOTE'S
NAME ON SUCH AN ARTICLE COMES AS SOMEWHAT OF A SURPRISE
AS HE WAS ONE OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL INSTIGATORS OF RAUL
CLEMENTE HUERTA'S CANDIDACY.

5. EVEN CRUSTY ANTONIO GRANDA, ARCH-CONSERVATIVE OWNER
OF QUITO'S CHANNEL 4 AND EL TIEMPO, MAY BE SOFTENING
TOWARD ROLDOS. ROLDOS AND HURTADO TOLD EMBOFFS ON JULY 20
OF THEIR AMAZEMENT WHEN THEY CALLED ON GRANDA THAT SAME
DAY TO BE OFFERED A CHAMPAGNE TOAST TO THEIR FIRST ROUND
VICTORY. THEY SAID THAT GRANDA EVEN OFFERED THEM
A 20 PERCENT REDUCTION ON ADVERTISING RATES ON
HIS MEDIA. ROLDOS AND HURTADO WERE COMPLETELY
NON-PLUSSED, NOT KNOWING WHETHER HE WAS SINCERE OR
CANNILY HEDGING HIS BETS.

6. COMMENT: THOSE PROPOSING THAT RAUL CLEMENTE HUERTA BE "CHOSEN" AS ROLDOS' RUN-OFF OPPONENT HAVE DONE SO LARGELY ON THE GROUNDS THAT HE WOULD BE MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN SIXTO DURAN IN CAPTURING CENTER-LEFT VOTES. THE ENDORSEMENT BY DEMOCRATIC LEFT, THE DEFECTION OF THE SOCIALISTS FROM HUERTA'S COALITION, EMBARRASSMENT OF A NOISESOME PANCHO HUERTA PRESENCE IN THE BREAST OF THE LIBERAL PARTY AND MORE FAVORABLE MEDIA TREATMENT OF ROLDOS, WILL PROBABLY HAVE A DAMPENING EFFECT ON THOSE EFFORTS. THOSE PROBLEMS WOULD, IN ANY EVENT, SEVERELY AFFECT RAUL CLEMENTE'S CHANCES SHOULD HE END UP THE SECOND CANDIDATE.

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